(c) whether there is any specific quota reserved for women candidates/ applicants for the post of sales assistants;

(d) whether any special perks and package has been offered to them;

(e) whether it is a fact that there is no promotional scope for women sales assistants in Super Bazar services; and

(f) if so. the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI A. K. ANTONY) : (a) Super Bazar has reported that no new appointment of Sales Assistants has been made since 1991 except for regularising the services of four employees who were already working on daily wages and appointment of two employees on compassionate grounds.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) No, Sir.

(e) and (f) Promotional scope is available to women Sales Assistants at par with male Sales Asstt. in accordance with the Recruitment & Promotional Rules according to their merit-cum-seniority subject to availability of vacancies.

Increasing prices of essential commodities

687. SHRI O. P. KOHLI : Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES. CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the prices of a number of essential commodities, such as pulses, edible oils, desi ghee, coffee, white butter, rice etc. have increased sharply in recent months ; and

(b) if so, by how much amount have the prices of these commodities risen, commodity-wise and what action has Government taken or propose to take to contain the rise in prices of these commodities ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI A. K. ANTONY): (a) A comparative statement indicating the trends in the index number of wholesale prices of various essential commodities is given in the Annexure. [*See* Appendix 172, Annexure No. 18[.

(b) The extent of the rise in the prices of selected essential commodities has also been indicated in the Annexure.

The Government has given highest priority for controlling the rise in prices within reasonable limits. The inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee on Monitoring of Prices reviews the price scenario and advises the concerned authorities to take appropriate and timely action. Efforts are being made to increase the production. Commodities which are in short supply are being imported to supplement their easy availability in the market. Imports of sugar, palmolein and cotton have been placed under Open General Licence (OGL). Public Distribution System is being strengthened and streamlined so that its benefits reach even in the inaccessible areas. Stringent action against hoarders, blackmarketeers and such anti-social activists is being taken under the Essential Comodmities Act and similar other legislations.